**“Stop violence against women in politics” urges the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences**

GENEVA 21 June 2016 - Prompted by the tragic death of Jo Cox, a Member of Parliament in the UK, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (SRVAW), Ms. Dubravka Šimonović decided to include the topic of violence against women in politics among the thematic priorities she intends to take up in the upcoming years. Ms. Šimonović recently presented her first report[[1]](#footnote-1) to the 32nd session of the Human Rights Council in which she outlines the vision for the VAW mandate and the thematic priorities she intends to focus on.

The extent of violence against women in political and public life, from killings to sexist remarks, as well as its impact on women’s willingness to exercise their right to political participation is not sufficiently researched and focused on. There is an urgent need to raise awareness on this specific violence that targets women politicians or women otherwise actively involved in public life and on the risks they face worldwide every day for their commitments to political and public life.

Violence against politically active women is, when it results in a tragic outcome in particular, a form of highly visible violence against women that aims to discourage their political participation. It constitutes a major barrier to women’s political participation and thus denies them their civil and political rights. It also hinders the participation of half of the world’s population, thus undermining the democratic exercise and good governance and as such is creating a democratic deficit.

Violence against women in politics ranges from verbal abuse and threat of reprisal to sexual harassment, rape and even murder in its most brutal and barbaric form. It is crucial to recognize that women are targeted because they are women, thus such violence is gendered in its form and most importantly has the impact to discourage all other women from exercising their voice and agency.

Marginalized groups of women face even increased risks. If you are young, poor, and geographically isolated, you are at extreme risk of experiencing VAW because of your political engagement in your group and community. The murder of Berta Carceres who was not only a community and indigenous activist put also a woman leader advocating for women’s rights put into light some of these intersecting factors which put women politically active at an even higher risk of violence.

As a recently launched campaign[[2]](#footnote-2) made it its slogan, violence against women in politics should not be the cost. The Special Rapporteur is supporting the campaign and will contribute to the increased reporting of this global issue, including through the conduct of country visits.

Among the other thematic priorities the SRVAW intends to take up in the upcoming year, an immediate priority will be the use of data on violence against women as a tool for its prevention. Following the Special Rapporteur’s call to establish a “femicide watch” or a “gender-related killing of women watch”[[3]](#footnote-3), she will present a report to the next General Assembly to assist States in establishing such watches at the national level.

Other thematic issues identified by the mandate include the protection of and services for women survivors of violence; the possibility of formulating a global code of conduct for police forces in carrying out their key role of prevention; prosecution of perpetrators and protection of women survivors of violence; technical assistance to States in the development of the necessary guidance on protecting women and girls against the risk of certain forms of violence, including sexual violence by smugglers, criminal groups and individuals in countries of origin, transit and destination in the context of forced displacement and refugee flows; the examination of the connections between fundamentalism or extremism and gender-based violence against women and its root causes; the building of capacity for legal profession and law enforcements officials dealing with VAW; the new challenge posed by online violence against women and lastly, the prevention and elimination of discriminatory laws and their negative impact in perpetuating or contributing to violence against women.

***Ms. Dubravka Šimonović*** *(Croatia) was appointed as Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences by the UN Human Rights Council in June 2015, to recommend measures, ways and means, at the national, regional and international levels, to eliminate violence against women and its causes, and to remedy its consequences. Ms.  Šimonović**has been member of the CEDAW Committee from 2002 to 2014. She headed the Human Rights Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia and was the Minister Plenipotentiary at the Permanent Mission of Croatia to the UN in New York. She was also Ambassador to the OSCE and UN in Vienna. She co-chaired the Ad hoc Committee (CAHVIO) of the Council of Europe that elaborated the Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).She has a PhD in Family Law and published books and articles on human rights and women’s rights. Learn more, log on to:* [*http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/SRWomenIndex.aspx*](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/SRWomenIndex.aspx)

*The Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council’s independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures’ experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.*

1. See A/HRC/32/42 http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/AnnualReports.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.ndi.org/not-the-cost [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16796&LangID=E [↑](#footnote-ref-3)